

The Efficacy of Christian Perseve-
rance in Time of TROUBLE.

A
SERMON

Preach'd on *Sunday* the 29th. of
March, 1713.

AT THE
CHURCH

OF

St. Saviour's, Southwark.

By HENRY SACHEVEREL, D.D. Fellow
of *Magdalen-College*, Oxon.

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Luke XXIII. Verse 34.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

TH E S E Words were spoken by the Blessed Jesus on the Cross, when he was Suffering Death for the whole *Race of Mankind*: This was his PRAYER, which he Offered up for his most *Irreconcilable Enemies*; who had Persecuted him thro' the whole Course of his Life, and at last caus'd him to Suffer a most Ignominious Death, *Even the Death of the Cross*: This was his *Illustrious Example* to his Disciples and Followers to a *Perfect Unity* one with another; to Pray for their Enemies, and return *Blessings for Cursings*: This was a full Confirmation of the Doctrine he had Preach'd and Taught his DISCIPLES, the Truth of which he Sealed with his most *Precious Blood*; and to make it more Evident, offer'd to his Father, this Holy and Dying Prayer for his Persecutors; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

My Design at present, is to Explain these Words of our *Blessed Saviour*; but before I begin, I shall make these *Two Observations*.

1. Why our *Blessed Saviour* calls him FATHER, when he was *Equal* with the *God Head*: And,
2. Why he asks *Forgiveness* for his ENEMIES, when it was in *His own Power* to Pardon them.

And these *Questions* are easily Answer'd, and the *Objections* Remov'd, when we Consider, *First*, That by our *Blessed Saviour's* calling Him Father, he was in his *State of Humiliation*; that he had not as then put off his *Mortal Body*, but was first to endure the bitter Pains which he suffer'd: And, *Secondly*, his asking *Forgiveness* for those whom he could forgive himself, was to shew his *Conformity to y^e Will of his Father*, as a *Manifestation* that he came into y^e World to Redeem Sinners from the Direful *Vengeance of Heaven* which was ready to fall upon *Mankind*. Our *Blessed Saviour* took upon him an *Omnipotent* God; but he could have Commanded

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Myriads of Angels to his Assistance, to the Ruin and Destruction of his *Enemies* and *Persecutors* : But the Blessed Jesus did not come into the World for that purpose ; he came to Save Men's Lives, not to Destroy them. His whose Life was a continued *Series* of *Grief* and *Trouble*, being *Affronted*, *Revil'd*, *Despis'd* and *Persecuted* by his most Malicious and Diabolical *Adversaries* : Yet such was his *Goodness*, such his *Condescension* to *Redeem* 'em, that he Suffer'd *Death* for their Sakes, and in his *Last Words* offer'd these most *Efficacious Words* in their Behalf, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

I shall from hence observe these three Things.

- I. *Wherein Praying for our Enemies consists.*
- II. *In what manner we are to Pray for 'em according to Holy Scripture.*
- III. *I shall give some Examples to Incite us to, and Illustrate that great Virtue of Praying for our Enemies. And,*
- IV. *I shall make an Application to the whole, and so Conclude.*

I. *Wherein Praying for our Enemies consist.*

By *Praying* for our *Enemies*, I would not be so Understood, as to make this great Virtue Contradictory to *Law*, or Repugnant to *Reason*. For tho' we ought to have *Charity* for all Men, and forgive all private *Injuries* as we expect to be forgiven our Selves ; yet we are not so far to Oblige 'em, or Trust 'em, as to procure our *Ruin*. This, indeed, is an Error in some *Good Persons* who puts this *Virtue* to the highest Strain ; but it is a Misguided *Notion* to do so : It is true, it shows the *Innocency* of the *Dove*, but it does not make appear the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*. Tho' we ought to *Pray* for the *Conversion* of our *Enemies*, that God would *enlighten* their *Minds* and *endue* them with his *Holy Spirit* ; yet we are not oblig'd to *Trust* them with our *Lives*, *Liberties* or *Estates*. *Beware of thy Enemies*, says the *Wise Son* of *Syrach* : *Avoid the Hypocrite ; He winketh with his Eyes, he speaketh with his Feet, he reacheth with his Fingers. Forwardness is in his Heart, he deviseth Mischief continually, he soweth Discord.* Prov. 6. 13, 13.

Now we ought to consider our *Enemies* in two Respects.

1. Enemies to the *Church and State*.
2. Enemies to the *Laws of God*, and those of their *Country*.

For the former. If we have any *Love for God Almighty*, any *Honour* for his *Holy Church and Religion*, we should *Defend It* with our *Lives and Fortunes*: And tho' (as I said before) we are oblig'd to *Pray for the Conversion* of our *Enemies*; yet we ought likewise to *Invoke God* in the Excellent Words of our most Holy Church, to *Abate their Pride, assuage their Malice, and confound their Devices*. These *Enemies*, indeed, are the *Objects* of our *Pity*, because they know not the *Truth*; their *Ignorance* in some Measure is *excusable*, and therefore we ought to *Pray for them* in the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

Now, *Enemies* to the *Laws of God* and their *Coantry* Challenge our *Prayers* for their *Conversion*, tho' we are not to avert the Stroke of Justice from their Heads. It is the Business of *Ministers* to *Instruct Wicked Men*, and *Magistrates* to *Punish* them if they do amiss. When *Sinners* are fully *Resolv'd* to lead *Wicked Lives*; when they throw away all *Concern for God and Religion*; when they *Contemn and Despise* both *Human and Divine Laws*; then, I say, we may leave 'em to their own Ways, and to the *Providence of God*, hoping he will bring them to *Justice* that they may have a thorough *Remorse of Conscience* here, in order to their obtaining *Remission and Pardon* for their *Sins* hereafter. I shall speak something more concerning the *Enemies* of the Church. And here the *Providence of God* is remarkably *Distinguish'd* to that truly *Apostolical Part* of it, the *Church of England*: The *Enemies* of it have *Dug a Pit*, and fell into it themselves; their *Cursings* are turn'd into *Blessings*; and their seeking the *Church's Ruin*, has prov'd almost their own *Downfal*. How *Wonderful* then is the *Goodness of God to Us*! That when we were at the *Brink of Destruction*, He with an *Out-stretch'd Arm* *Interpos'd* for Us, and brought us to the *Comfortable Rays of Divine Light*! We ought to esteem the *Violence and Malice* of our *Enemies*, either as a *Reward* of our *Iniquities* in this World, that the *Punishment* we *Receive* here, may be a means to obtain *Glo-*

ry hereafter : Or else, as a particular *Blessing* from God Almighty, who by his *Providence* so orders it, as to turn our *Enemies Malice* and *Hatred*, to our greatest *Benefit* and *Advantage*. God finds Ways to Relieve his *Servants* out of *Trouble*, tho' there be several *Obstacles* in the *Encompassing* of it : He breaks the *Chariot Wheels* of a *Persecuting Pharaoh*, Drowns him and his *Host* in the *Inundation*, while he lets his *People of Israel* pass over on *Dry-Land*. And therefore, tho' *Evils* surround us on every side, we ought not to *Murmur* at it ; it is the *Lord's Doing* to try our *Patience*, and he will *Deliver* us in his own *Good Time*.

A Remarkable Instance of this, is of *David*, a *Man after God's own Heart*, and as good a *Prince* as ever then had *Reign'd*. When that Good and Pious *King* was forc'd from the *Throne* by his *Rebellious Son Absalom*, and in his *Melancholly Journey* was *Reproached* and *Cursed* by that *Traytor Shimei*, he patiently Received his *Curses* and *Revilings* and would not (tho' he might) be *Reveng'd* on him. Then said *Abishai*, the *Son of Zerviah*, unto the *King*, *Why should this dead Dog curse my Lord the King ? Let me go over I pray thee, and take off his Head.* And the *King* said, *What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zerviah ? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.* Who shall then say, *Wherefore hast thou done so ?* II. Sam. XVI. 9, 10.

I come now to the Second Proposition I propos'd to speak to, Namely,

II. In what a manner we ought to pray for our *Enemies* according to *Holy Scripture*.

The *Sacred Scripture* gives us to understand, that we should bear with all *Indignities*, suffer all *Affronts*, and return *Good for Evil*. This is a hard *Injunction* upon those, who are called *Men of Honour*. To do so (say they) would not mollify the *Hearts* of our *Adversaries*, but rather make them ride more *Triumphant* over us. And therefore these *Gentlemen*, far from *Praying* from their *Enemies*, are for seeking their own *Revenge* by *Murder*, contrary to the *Laws* of *God* or *Man*, and in doing which, often proves the *Destruction* of their own precious *Souls*.

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A *Christian's Satisfaction* is to *Pray* for his *Enemies*: He follows his Master's *Dying Example* on the *Cross*: This he knows is a sure Way to heap a Fire of Coals in their Heads. *St. Stephen*, of all the *Apostles*, came the nighest, and most Imitated the Blessed Lord of *Life*. His last Words were offer'd up as a *Petition* for his *Adversaries*: Lord, (says he) lay not my Sins to their Charge. A truly *Christian Example*, an exact Imitation of the *Saviour* of the World. Such an *Example*, I say that had not his *Persecutor's Hearts* been harder than the *Stones* which were flung at him, they would never have Slain so Holy, so Religious a *Saint*.

Tho' *Christ* has Preach'd it in the most Unconfin'd Terms of *Praying* for our *Enemies*; yet (as I observ'd before) there is a Just *Limitation* according to the *Law* and *Reason*. *David*, that Just and Holy King, being moved at the *Enemies* of the *Living God*, tho' he was a most Merciful Prince upon other Accounts, yet pronounces in one of his *Psalms* the most Dreadful *Curses* against 'em. And likewise *St. Paul* says, being Cursed, we Bless; being Persecuted, we Suffer: And yet we find in Contradiction to it, that he struck *Elymas* the Sorcerer with Blindness, *Acts 11.* and because *Alexander* the Smith had done him much Wrong, he wished the Lord might Reward him according to his Works. But such *Prayers* are only against the *Enemies* of *God* and *Religion*, who as they Dispise both, deserve not our *Invocations*.

But to *Christians*, who profess the *Living God* of *Heaven*, tho' they be our *Enemies*, yet we ought to *Pray* for them, as *Christ* Pray'd for us, that we might be perfect, even as our Father in *Heaven* is perfect. Nor ought we only to *Pray* for these sort of *Enemies*, but we are likewise oblig'd to Comfort and Relieve them, according to their several *Necessities*. Are your *Enemies Naked*? Cloath them. Are they *Hungry*? Give 'em Bread. Are they *Thirsty*? Give 'em Drink. Are they *Afflicted*? Comfort them. In a Word, contribute what you can to their *Relief* and *Support* in their *Extremity*.

Certainly, if we would sincerely be thought what we Profess our Selves, it is our Indispensable Duty to *Pray* for our *Enemies*: This makes us more than *Conquerors*, and causes our *Religion* to Shine with a most Distinguishing
Lustre.

Lustre. As we esteem the *Christian Profession* to be the *Best*, sure we ought to *Live up to the most Sublime Duties* it contains: Else, why is our *Religion* better than others? The *Stoics*, that *Rigid Sect of Philosophers*, lived up to the most *strictest Rules of Morality*, out of a *meer stupid Principle of Human Reason*: And then shall not *Christians*, who are *Inspir'd by the Holy Spirit of God*, and have a *more certain Promise of Happiness* than they had of a glorious *Immortality thro' Divine Revelation*, *Live up as much to the Gospel*, as they did to their *Philosophy*? We must not only be as *strict in our Discipline* as they were, but we must also exceed 'em in a great Measure; for except our *Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, we shall in no wise enter into the *Kingdom of Heaven*. And certainly, if any thing can prove our selves to be *Christians*, it is this most *Illustrious Virtue of Praying for our Enemies*; a *Virtue so Repugnant, so Contrary to Human Nature*. As our *Blessed Saviour* is most particularly Remarkable for this, it caus'd this Saying of him, *That he gain'd more esteem by Praying for his Enemies, than by Raising Lazarus from the Dead*.

Again. This *Virtue of Praying for our Enemies* is the *True Badge or Characteristic of a Christian*. It was by this our *Blessed Saviour* Distinguish'd his *Disciples* from other Men: *By this*, says the Redeemer of the World, *shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another*, Joh. 13. 34.

It must be confessed, that *Christ* being equal in *Godhead* with the *Father*, and having in his *Filiation* all the *Divine Perfections* in him, it is impossible that we poor *Mortals* should pretend to come near, much less equalize that *Bright Original*: Yet, doubtless, it is the *Duty of all those profess themselves Christians*, to copy after, and imitate him as much they can; to practice the *Doctrine of Self-Denial and Resignation* to his *Providence*; to forgive our *Enemies*, which is a *distinguishing Mark of Heroic Piety*; to vindicate his *Holy Church* from the *Ridicules of Impious and Wicked Men*; to trace the *Steps of the Great Leader of our Salvation* thro' all the *Troubles and Sorrows, the Afflictions and Persecutions of Human Life*; and, in a Word, to take up his *Cross* with *Chearfulness*, follow him with *Courage and Consolation*, and even suffer *Death* if self for his sake.

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I am now come to the third Thing I propos'd to speak to, viz.

III. *To give some Examples to incite us to, and illustrate that Christian Virtue of praying for our Enemies.*

And here I shall begin with the *Example* of our BLESSED SAVIOUR; whom, if we trace his LIFE from the *Manger* to the *Cross*, we shall find a *continued Series* of *Misfortunes* thro' the *whole Course* of it. He is justly stil'd, a Man who was *sorrowful even unto Death*: He suffer'd patiently the *Indignities* of a *sinful and ungrateful World*. And when he was *reviled*, he *reviled not again*, but *blessed those that cursed him*, and *prayed for those that despitely used him*. His *Doctrine* and his *Life* was so exactly *coherent*, his *Virtue* and *Innocency* shin'd so conspicuously in his *Person*, *Words* and *Actions*, that when he was try'd before *Pontius Pilate*, the Judge could find *no Fault in him*. Let us now view his Behaviour on the Mount. Here we find the Lord of Life surrounded by a Multitude of his Enemies, armed with *Staves*, &c. to take him: Yet such was the Majesty of his Countenance, that they fell to the Ground at his Appearance. He patiently suffer'd himself to be kissed by the Arch-Traytor *Judas*; and without making Resistance, tho' he could have commanded the Host of Heaven to his Assistance, he willingly surrender'd himself to that wicked People's Power, who sought his Destruction. Such was his Kindness, such his Love towards his Enemies, that when *St. Peter* drew his Sword, and cut off the Ear of *Malchus* the High-Priest's Servant, in Vindication of the Lord of Life; the Blessed and Holy JESUS, far from approving this Violence, reprehended the Apostle for the Action, and cured the Wound which was gave in his Defence.

After this, the *King of Heaven* is brought before *Pilate* in the Judgment-Hall: He is there accused of *PERVERTING the Nation*, by *Preaching Sedition*, and not giving *Tribute to Caesar*, tho' he was the most innocent Person as ever lived. He answers nothing, but quietly submits himself to their unjust Judgments. The Blessed JESUS is then set at naught, and sent to *Herod*, who mocks him: His Body is cover'd with an *Imperial Robe*, and sent back to *Pilate* again. The *Chief-Priests* accuse him, pronounce him

him worthy of Death ; yet *Pilate* is willing to release him, and speaks him innocent. The Multitude, alas ! bears the Sway, and *Barrabas* is released, that the *Lord of Life* might be crucified. He is first *unmercifully scourged* with most severe Stripes ; a *Crown of Thorns* is platted upon his most *Holy Head* ; a *Reed* is put in his *Hand* for a *Ludicrous Scepter* , and the Soldiers bow down their Knees to mock and deride him : He is then *barbarously smitten* on the *Head*, and most *ignominiously spit upon*. At last (Horror to think upon !) he is led to the *Place of Execution* ; but first disrob'd of his Garments , in which they mock'd him, and afterwards compell'd to bear his *Cross*. His *Hands* and *Feet* are then extended upon it, and fasten'd thereto with Nails : He is there in the midst of his cruel ~~his~~ *Enemies*, crucified between two *Thieves*, and abandon'd by his *Disciples* and *Followers*. No doubt but great were the Pains which he suffer'd in his *Body*, but abundantly greater the Sorrows of his *Soul*. In this Condition he is again mock'd and derided by the *Rulers* and *People* ; in this Agony he remain'd on the *Cross*, Destitute, Disconsolate, Bleeding, Dying.

Here was Love to Mankind, Unexpected, not *Desir'd*, nor *Deserv'd* ! That the SON of GOD should come down from *Heaven* for our Sakes ; that he should *Take Human Flesh upon him*, and bear all the *Casualties* of *Human Life* ; and after all this, Suffer the cruel Death of the *Cross* ! O *unspeakable Love* ! O *undeserved Kindness* ! How shall we Sufficiently Adore his most *Holy Name* ? How shall we make a *Retaliation* for this most *Inestimable Blessing* ? Sure this *Example* ought to move us, and make us follow the *Blessed Pattern of our Salvation*. As he fell a *Victim* for our Sins, and sacrificed himself on the Altar for us ; let us also be as willing to suffer for the sake of his *Doctrine*, as he was for our Crimes and Transgressions. Let us forgive the Sins of our *Enemies* as he forgave his, in his *Dying Words* on the *Cross*, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*.

Tho' his Blood was shed for the Remission of our Sins, yet there was more Blood to be shed for the Propagation of his Gospel. The Blessed Martyr St. *Stephen* (as I observ'd before) was persecuted and murder'd for preaching his *Doctrine*. His *Disciples* and *Followers* thought it an

Honour to dye for his Cause, and were proud to wear the Crown of Martyrdom. Their lively Faith and Hopes of an Immortal Crown made 'em triumphant in the midst of Flames: The more they were persecuted, the brighter the Doctrine of the Blessed JESUS appeared: It conspicuously shin'd with a most distinguishing Lustre thro' the most barbarous Persecutions; so that in a little time, they who were the most Malicious Persecutors against the Christian Religion became the most Zealous Professors ~~for~~ it. The blessed Apostle St. Paul is an undeniable Instance of this: He, indeed, was converted by a *Supernatural Miracle* from Heaven as he was upon his Journey to *Damascus*. Soon was he changed from a *Persecutor* to a *Professor*; and instead of *punishing* and *imprisoning* the *Members of Christ*, became a *Preacher of the Messiah*. What a wonderful Change was here! How did it amaze the People who heard him! *Is not this he*, said they, *that destroyed them which called on this Name at Jerusalem, and came hither for that Intent that he might bring them bound to the Chief Priests?* This struck them with Emulation, and filled them with Rage, that they sought to take away his Life: Yet this Convert persevered in the Faith, was try'd at *Jerusalem*, and upon his Appeal sent to *Rome*, where he was acquitted, but after suffer'd Martyrdom in the Reign of *Nero* the Emperor; at whose Death, in Imitation of his Lord and Master, he prayed for his *Enemies and Persecutors*.

The *Christian Religion* has many *Examples* of this kind, and particularly our Holy Church, whose *Professors* have shed their Blood in this Kingdom for it's Defence in the *Dark and Bloody Times of Popery*, when the *True Sons* of the Church were dragged to the Flames by the Malice of *Rome* and *Hell*, and wore the *Crowns of Martyrdom* in Vindication of that Religion, which, thro' the *Providence of God*, is now *Establish'd*, *Settl'd* and *Strengthen'd* against all the Attempts of our *Open Enemies* on the One Hand, and the *Malicious Designs* of our *Private Adversaries* on the Other.

Many are they who *Adorn* our *Bloody Calender*, that Suffer'd for the Faith, to gain a *Crown of Life*; who, with St. Paul, *gloried in their Sufferings*, for the sake of him who Suffer'd for their Sins: But certainly that which
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Eclipses all the *Lesser-Lights* of the Church, and proves the greatest (tho' Unfortunate) Ornament to it, is the *Life and Death* of the **Royal Martyr**. He follow'd the Example of his Blessed Lord and Master JESUS CHRIST, and patiently endured all *Tribulations*. How was this *Holy and Pious King* Try'd by a pretended Court of Judicature, from whom he could expect to find as little *Justice* as *Mercy*? How disrespectfully was he used by his own *Rebellious Subjects*, who *calumniated, abused and bespatter'd* him with *infinite Lies* and *false Reports*? Was ever such Monsters in Nature, to rob him of his *Crown and Dignity*, force him to the *utmost Extremity* imaginable, and then at last bring him to the *Block*? There was an End of all the Sufferings of this Good and Pious King. There he laid down his Crown, his Scepter, and his Life, for an Incorruptable and Immortal Crown of Glory in the highest Heavens. But here let us not conclude without taking Notice how he pray'd for his Enemies with his last Breath, and how willing he was to take off the Guilt from his most Malignant Adversaries. "God forbid
 " (saith he) I should lay it upon the Two Houses of Par-
 " liament, there is no necessity of either, I hope they
 " are free of this Guilt; but I believe that *Ill Instruments*
 " between them and me, have been the Cause of this Blood-
 " shed, so that I as find my self clear of this, I hope, and
 " pray God, that they may too: Yet for all this, God
 " forbid I should be so ill a Christian, as not to say God's
 " Judgments are just upon me: many times he doth pay
 " Justice by an unjust Sentence, that is ordinary; I will say
 " this, that an *unjust Sentence* that I suffered to take
 " effect is punish'd by an *unjust Sentence* upon me; so far
 " I have said to shew I am an *Innocent Man*. Now to
 " shew you that I am a good Christian, I hope there is a
 " good Man [says he, pointing to the Bishop] that will
 " bear me witness, that I have forgotten all the World,
 " and even those in particular that have been the Cause
 " of my Death; who they are God knows, I do not de-
 " sire to know, I pray God forgive them: But this is
 " not all, my *Charity* must go yet farther. I wish that they
 " may repent; indeed they have committed a great Sin
 " in that particular; I pray God, with St. Stephen, that
 " be not laid to their Charge, and withal that they may
 " take

“ take Care ~~for~~ the Peace of the Kingdom, for my Charity commands me not only to forgive particular Men, but endeavour to may last Gasp for the Peace of the Kingdom ”.

Holy and precious Words are these proceeding from a no less holy and Christian King; who, in Imitation of our blessed Saviour, rewarded Good for Evil, and pray'd for those Traytors who were the only Cause of his Death. Such *Rebels*, such *Monsters in Nature*, did not deserve his Prayers; but this shew'd his *Majesty* and *Humility*, his *Heroic Charity* and *Christian Virtue*; for which his Name will be esteem'd by all *Loyal, Christian* and *Pious Men*, till Time shall be no more.

It is to be fear'd that many thro' a *blind Ignorance*, *Prejudice*, or other ill *Principle* are much of the same Temper with those who *consented*, and were not grieved for the *Murder* of this *unfortunate King*; and would be willing to *undermine Church and State* in order to a total Subversion: Such *Men* (as I observ'd before) ought to be pray'd for, in order to their *Conversion*; but equally to be *watch'd after* and *avoided*. For such *Principles* they imbibe by the Education of their *ignorant Teachers*, are the *unfortunate Occasions* of *Ana chy in Government*, to the *Downfal of Monarchy* and *Episcopacy*. But blessed be God, we are deliver'd from our *Enemies*; and tho' the Church has been in *Captivity a long while*, yet the Almighty hath work'd her *Deliverance* when she was in the *greatest Danger*. She cried to the Lord in her *Distress*, and he heard her *Prayer*, comforted her, and rais'd the *Walls of her Jerusalem*. Of such *Force*, such *Efficacy* are the Prayers of the Just, that they are heard in the *highest Heavens*. Did not the Prayers of King *Asa* cause *Thousands* to fall a *Sacrifice* to his Army? Did not *Joshua* lay the Town of *Jerico* in Dust with a *Petition*? Had not *Hezekiah* his Life prolonged by an *Intercession*? And did not the Lord restore the Hand of *Jeroboam* upon the Prayer of the *Prophet*? All these were done by Prayer; of such *Force* are the *Petitions* of the Godly, especially the *Servants* or *Priests* of the Lord.

That the Prayers of the Ministers are of great Force, I thus prove it from Holy Scripture. When *Abimilech* had committed the Sin (tho' unknown to him) of taking *Sarah, Abraham's Wife*, the Lord appeared to him in a *Dream*
by

by Night, saying unto him, Behold, thou art but a dead Man, for the Woman which thou hast taken; for she is a Man's Wife. Tho' King Abimelech excused himself upon Account of his Ignorance, yet the Lord was not contented, but bid him restore the Man his Wife: for (said he) he is a Prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: And he did so; and Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed Abimelech and his Wife, and his Maid Servants, and they bare Children. Gen. 20. 17.

So likewise when the Anger of the Lord was kindled against the three Elders, who had ipoke the thing that was right to him of Job; the Lord thus speaketh to Eliphaz the Temanite, Take therefore thou (and thy two Friends) seven Bullocks and seven Rams, and go to my Servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a Burnt-Offering, and my Servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your Folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my Servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Namathite went, and did according as the Lord had commanded 'em: The Lord also accepted Job. XLII. Job. 8, 9.

I would not here be understood, to advance any such Doctrine that the People cannot be saved without the Prayers of the Clergy; but this I must say, that the Petitions of the Church are of great Efficacy, and consequently absolutely necessary for Sinners truly Penitent. For as God has given Power to his Ministers to pronounce Absolution and Remission of Sins to penitent Sinners, it cannot be doubted but their Prayers are of greater Efficacy than the Peoples. Of how great Force was the Intercession of Abraham to save Gomorrah; that, had there been but ten Righteous Persons, the Lord would not have destroy'd that City for his sake? Did not Elisha's Prayer cause a Supernatural Power to fill the Ditches full of Water, for the Armies of the Kings of Israel and Judah, who went to War against the King of Moab? Did not the Prayer of the same Prophet raise the dead Son of the Shumanite to Life, when his Servant Gehazi could not do it? And did not the Blessed Jesus give Authority to his Disciples to work Miracles, to heal

heal the Sick, cure the Lame, cause the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, the Dumb to speak, and which is the greatest of all these, even raise the Dead to Life? And, Lastly, did not he grant to 'em, whatever they would ask in his Name?

Whatsoever sins (says our Saviour) *ye forgive on Earth shall be forgiven in Heaven; and whatsoever sins ye retain on Earth shall be remitted in Heaven.* From this Text the Church of Rome claims their Authority; I will only conclude from this, That we can pronounce Absolution and Remission of Sins, and that the Prayers of the Ministers are of great Efficacy with God to obtain Pardon for the Transgressions of the People.

It does not belong to Men, who are not Qualified for the Altar, to Invade the Priests Office: 'Tis a great Presumption in the highest Degree. When the Oxen shook the Ark of God, and Uzzah put forth his Hand to hold it, ~~yet~~ as he was not of the Sons of Levi, the Lord smote him for his Error, that he Died.

God has a particular Regard to his Ambassadors, and hears their Prayers in a peculiar manner. When his Prophet had Cried against the *Altar* of the Lord, while *Jeroboam* was Burning Incense, the King being enrag'd, stretcht forth his Arm to lay hold on him, and immediately his Sacrilegious Hand Withered, so that he could not pull it back again. *And the King answered and said unto the Man of God, Intreat now the Face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my Hand may be restored again. And the Man of God, besought the Lord, and the King's Hand was restored to him again, and became as it was before.* 1.-Kings XIII. 6.

Now when the Church of the Lord is in the greatest Danger; when she is brought almost to Destruction by the Malice of her Enemies; when her Altars are, as it were, Demolished; her Song Revil'd, Detam'd, Silenc'd and Persecuted; when she is forsaken of her Friends, and has none to Comfor her: Then it is that God shews his Power and Mercy, protects her from the Malice of her Adversaries, turns the Hearts of her Enemies, and makes them her Friends, raising her from her Deplorable State, and Exalting her Higher than she was before.

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It is the Wisdom of God to try the Patience of his Church ; He makes her undergo a Fiery Tryal, even as Silver is try'd by the Furance ; *for whom he Loveth he Chastiseth.* But tho' he Suffers her often to Languish, yet he will not leave her in her Extremity, and will not Suffer *his Holy Ones to Perish.*

Remarkable, we find, is the Providence of God to this Nation ; that we have a Pious, Holy, Meek, Merciful, Just and Wise Princess, upon the Throne of her Ancestors ; that the Church and State is Guided, Rul'd and Protected by the Best of QUEENS ; a Queen whose daily Care is for the Good of the Church of Christ, and the Welfare of her People ; a Queen, whose Delight is to Unite Her Subjects in Love and Unity, and whose Desire is to make 'em compleatly Happy. If any thing demands our Prayers, certainly we ought to Praise and Magnify God's Holy Name for this most Inestimable Blessing. And as we enjoy all the Happiness we could wish for thro' his Providence, so ought we to Implore his Blessing for the Continuation of our Joy. Let us also pray for the Conversion of our Enemies, that God would wipe the Scales from their Eyes, to Distinguish Light from Darkness, Good from Evil ; and make them forsake the wild Freaks of Enthusiasm, to embrace a Religion without Superstition, Plain, Pure and Apostolical ; If our Enemies will not be Converted, if they continue in a Rebellious Obstinacy, and will not be Convicted by the Light of Religion or Reason, it is our Duty to stand upon our Guard, to Watch against 'em, to avoid their Wickedness, and Pray that God would *Abate their Pride, Assuage their Malice and Confound their Devices* : Or, to be favourable, according to the Example of our Blessed Saviour, let us pity their Ignorance in those his Dying Words, *Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.*

I confess, I have intrenched too long upon your Patience, but I thought it convenient to urge as much as possible that Christian and most Sublime Virtue of *praying for our Enemies*, especially on such a particular Occasion as this ; a Duty which our Blessed Saviour left us as an Example on the Cross ; a Duty, which, if rightly observed, will make us *more than Conquerors* here, and exalt

us to reign triumphant with the Saints in Heaven hereafter. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the sake of thy only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.

The Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, keep your Hearts and Minas in the Knowledge and Love of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be among you, and remain with you, both now, and for evermore. Amen.



F I N I S.
